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House Joint Resolution 3

January 17, 2011

Presented by Jim Kropp

House Federal Relations, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Jim Kropp, Law Enforcement Bureau Chief for Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here in support of House Joint Resolution 3.

Since its inception, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks has participated in the Statewide Interoperability Safety Communications effort. We believe that interoperability is not only a necessity for our staff but for the people of the state. It provides what will likely be a life-saving means of providing public safety services throughout Montana. Montana Game Wardens work in isolated and remote areas will depend on this communication system not only for officer safety in places we never had communications before. It will surely enhance the work we do with other federal, state and local public safety and resource agencies.

Along with other agencies, we began the transition to this system many years ago through the purchase of digital radio equipment. We were fortunate to receive grant aid in this, as we would otherwise still be behind the equipment curve. Like other agencies, we have been struggling to keep up with the system, both financially and logistically. The overall concept is a good and important one. Cost has been enormous, but we have made every effort to build into the digital system whenever possible, purchasing equipment, software and training personnel to maximize the expenditures. We believe that at this point, however, and before proceeding further, a comprehensive review of where the effort is at, where it should go and the means of acquiring the necessary funding to make it a reality is necessary. We concur that the best way to accomplish this is through legislative review under the auspices of an interim committee. We therefore support this resolution and hope that you see fit to embark on this work. Thank you.